

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The October 7, 2003 Office Action and the Examiner's comments have been carefully considered. In response, the drawings are amended, claims are cancelled, amended and added, and remarks are set forth below in a sincere effort to place the present application in form for allowance. The amendments are supported by the application as originally filed. Therefore, no new matter added.

DRAWINGS

In the Office Action the drawings are objected to because the Examiner contends that the boxes 1 and 41-43 needs textual identifiers. In response, Fig. 1 of the drawings is amended to include textual identifiers for the boxes identified by reference numerals 1 and 41-44.

A new formal drawing for Fig. 1 is not enclosed. A new formal drawing for Fig. 1 will be submitted at a later date.

In view of the amendment of Fig. 1, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections to the drawings are respectfully requested.

PRIOR ART REJECTIONS

In the Office Action claims 1, 2, 4 and 6 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by USP 2,489,732 (Trimble). Claims 1-7 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Trimble in view of USP 4,803,917 (Barbieri) and USP 5,651,775 (Walker et al.). Claims 1, 8 and 9 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Trimble in view of USP 4,415,065 (Sandstedt). Claims 10-14 are rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Trimble in view of Barbieri, Walker et al. and Sandstedt.

The present claimed invention as defined by the amended claims is directed to a food and drink servicing system for an eating establishment. The system includes a customer-operated automatic meal ticket dispenser which accepts a customer-initiated order, corresponding to order identifying information, and which dispenses a meal ticket. The dispenser includes first transmitting means for transmitting the order identifying information of the meal ticket proximate the time the order is placed. The system also includes reading units, arranged in customers' tables, respectively, for reading order identifying information of meal tickets of customers, second transmitting means for transmitting cooking information including the order

identifying information read by a respective reading unit and a seat number identifying information on the table in which the reading unit is arranged. The system also includes cooking information informing means for receiving the order identifying information transmitted by the first transmitting means and the cooking information transmitted by the second transmitting means, and for informing a cook or a cooking director of the order identifying information and the seat number identifying information of the cooking information transmitted by the second transmitting means.

In response to the prior art rejections, independent claims 1 and 3 are amended to include the automatic meal ticket dispenser. The automatic meal ticket dispenser as recited in claims 1 and 3 is a customer-operated device which accepts a customer-initiated order and which then dispenses a meal ticket corresponding to the customer's order. The automatic meal ticket dispenser also includes first transmitting means which transmits information corresponding to the order to cooking information informing means which is located in a food preparation area. The order information is transmitted to the cooking information informing means proximate the time the order is placed.

As the result of the present invention, a customer can place their food order at the automatic meal ticket dispenser prior to

obtaining a seat. Once the order is placed by the customer, the order is transmitted by the automatic meal ticket dispenser to a food preparation location which begins preparation of the customer's food irrespective of whether the customer has obtained a seat in the eating establishment. Once the customer obtains a seat in the eating establishment, the customer inserts the ticket provided by the automatic ticket dispenser into a reading unit provided at the seating location. The reading unit transmits the customer's order identifying information (for example, an order number) and the seating location of the customer. When the preparation of the food is complete, the food is provided to the customer at the customer seating location.

According to the present invention, at the time the customer purchases the ticket an instruction to start cooking is sent to the automatic cooking unit (4). When the customer obtains a seat in the eating establishment and inserts a meal ticket in the reading unit (2), the order and seat number of the customer are sent to the food preparation location so that the food preparers know where to send the food which was prepared in response to the order transmitted by the first transmitting means. As a result, the customer is served in the shortest amount of time in reliable manner. Since customers are not taking up seats while waiting to place an order, more customers can use the seats during a given

time period which will increase the volume of customers the eating establishment can serve.

As stated above in response to the rejection of the independent claims, claims 1 and 3 are amended to include a specific recitation of the automatic meal ticket dispenser which was previously recited in claim 8. In the Office Action the Examiner rejects claim 8 by combining Trimble with Sandstedt and contends that Sandstedt teaches an automatic meal ticket dispenser.

Applicant respectfully states that Sandstedt does not disclose the automatic ticket dispenser as now recited in claims 1 and 3. Sandstedt teaches that a waiter/waitress operates a handheld terminal 12 and enters an order which is provided by a customer at a seating location (that is, the customer is already seated in the eating establishment). After the order is entered by the waiter/waitress, the order is transferred to a central processor.

Sandstedt does not disclose, teach or suggest a customer-operated unit (automatic meal ticket dispenser) which accepts a customer-initiated order, corresponding to order identifying information and which dispenses a meal ticket, first transmitting means for transmitting the order proximate the time the order is placed, or second transmitting means as recited in claims 1 and

3.

None of the other references of record close the gap between the present claimed invention as defined by amended claims 1 and 3 and Trimble in view of Sandstedt.

In view of the foregoing, claims 1, 3 and claims 4-7 which are dependent thereon are patentable over the cited references under 35 USC 102 as well as 35 USC 103.

Since the automatic meal ticket dispenser limitation has been added to independent claims 1 and 3, claims 8-14 which recited this limitation have been cancelled.

NEW CLAIMS

New claims 15-23 are added to the present application. Claims 15-20 further define and limit the invention defined by claim 1 and 3. Claims 15-20 are patentable over the cited references in view of their dependence on claims 1 or 3 and because the references do not disclose, teach or suggest the limitations set forth in claims 15-20.

Claim 21 is an independent claim and specifically recites that the automatic meal ticket dispenser is customer-operated. New claim 21 is patentable over the cited references for the reason set forth above in connection with claims 1 and 3 and because the references do not disclose, teach or suggest an automatic meal ticket dispenser which accepts a customer's order

prior to the customer being seated and which transmits the order to the meal preparation center proximate the time the order is provided to the dispenser which is prior to the customer being seated.

In view of the foregoing, claim 21 is patentable over the cited references under 35 USC 102 as well as 35 USC 103.

Claims 22 and 23 are dependent on claim 21 and further define and limit the invention defined by claim 21. Claims 22 and 23 are patentable over the cited references in view of their dependence on claim 21 and because the references do not disclose, teach or suggest each of the limitations set forth in claims 22 and 23.

It is respectfully submitted that no additional fees are due for the presentation of claims 15-23. However, if any additional fees are due, please charge our deposit account number 06-1378 for such sum.

* * * * *

In view of the foregoing, entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

Appln. No. 09/870,545
Amendment dated January 7, 2004
Reply to Office Action of October 7, 2003

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

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seated.

In view of the foregoing, claim 21 is patentable over the cited references under 35 USC 102 as well as 35 USC 103.

Claims 22 and 23 are dependent on claim 21 and further define and limit the invention defined by claim 21. Claims 22 and 23 are patentable over the cited references in view of their dependence on claim 21 and because the references do not disclose, teach or suggest each of the limitations set forth in claims 22 and 23.

It is respectfully submitted that no additional fees are due for the presentation of claims 15-23. However, if any additional fees are due, please charge our deposit account number 06-1378 for such sum.

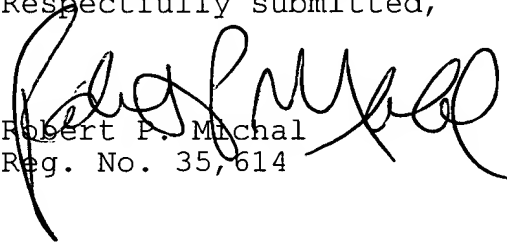
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